THE UNIVERSE

a mirror of itself

by Peter Lamborn Wilson

"THE UNIVERSE:

A MIRROR OF ITSELF"

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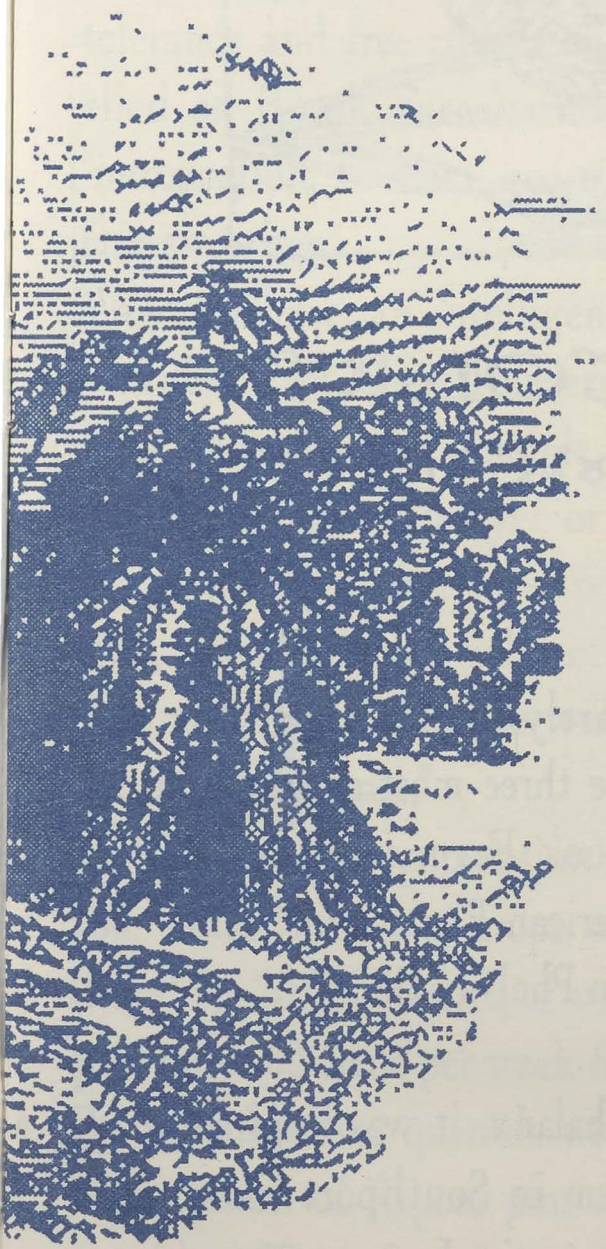
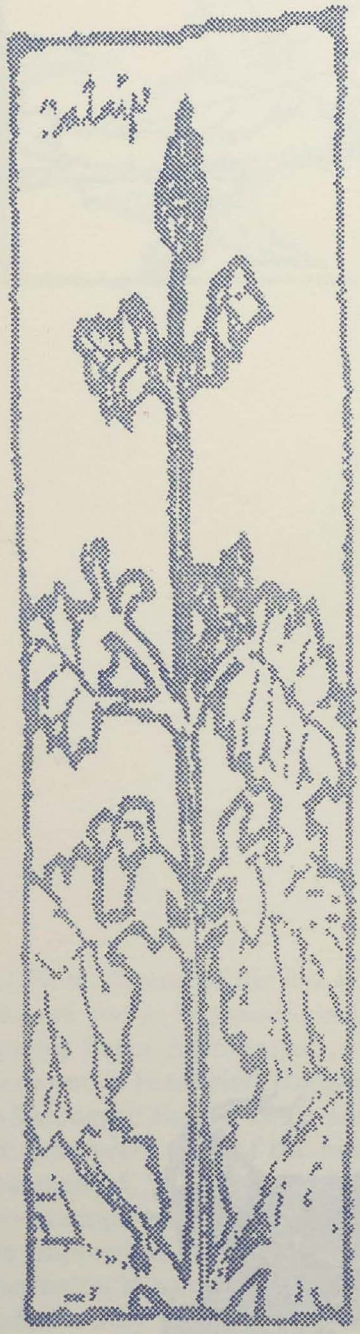
THE
FOUNDING
OF THE
BENDER HOLLOW PHALANX
&
"G" SCHOOL
ASSOCIATION

xexoxial endarchy



"In fact Schelling, when he said that the universe is a mirror of itself, did not at all prove this truth in detail — he ventured it. A friend of mine went to visit him in Munich and questioned him about this thesis. He did not know what to say: it was by chance that he had spoken well."

–Charles Fourier–



II. LUXUROMANIA

.Charles Fourier (born April 7, 1772; experienced the revelation of Harmony in 1799; died 1837), would have criticized the American phalanxes (including the Wisconsin) quite severely for ignoring two basic requirements for success: a population of 1,620 (representing all possible categories of human Passion), and a way of life devoted to "luxury" (including wine!) and culture, rather than mere associative agriculture — and sobriety. Fourier's American disciples tended to ignore or even suppress his truly radical teachings in favor of the bare bones of his theory of Attractive Labor (the idea that society will fall naturally into Harmony if and when everyone does only and all their true desire). Fourier's grand cosmology of living bi-sexual planets making love across Space via "Aromal Rays"; his devastating critique of Civilized morality and marriage, and his praise of polygamy, polyandry, homosexuality, lesbianism, and every other

known "mania"; his brilliant and obsessive discourse on "Gastrosophy" or Harmonian meta-cuisine (five meals a day each of at least 30 dishes); his occult theory of Analogies (picked up by Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Walter Benjamin and Andre Breton); his mysterious numeromania; his theory of Opera as the complete artwork of the future — etc., etc. — none of this had much appeal for the earnest reform-minded freethinking teetotling puritans and farmers of New England and the Midwest.

Nevertheless, a great deal of Fourier's charming essence managed to filter its way into the American Fourierist movement — along with rules for the Industrial Series and division of dividends (Fourier's "practical" ideas), a certain "festal and material bodily principle" (to quote Bakhtin) infused the new-world phalansteries and seeped out into general mid-19th-century Reform circles. For instance, Frederick Law Olmstead (designer of Central Park) confessed Fourierist leanings, and Walt Whitman probably adopted his butterfly symbol from Fourier's "Papillonne", the technical term for the Passion for variety and multiplicity (3).

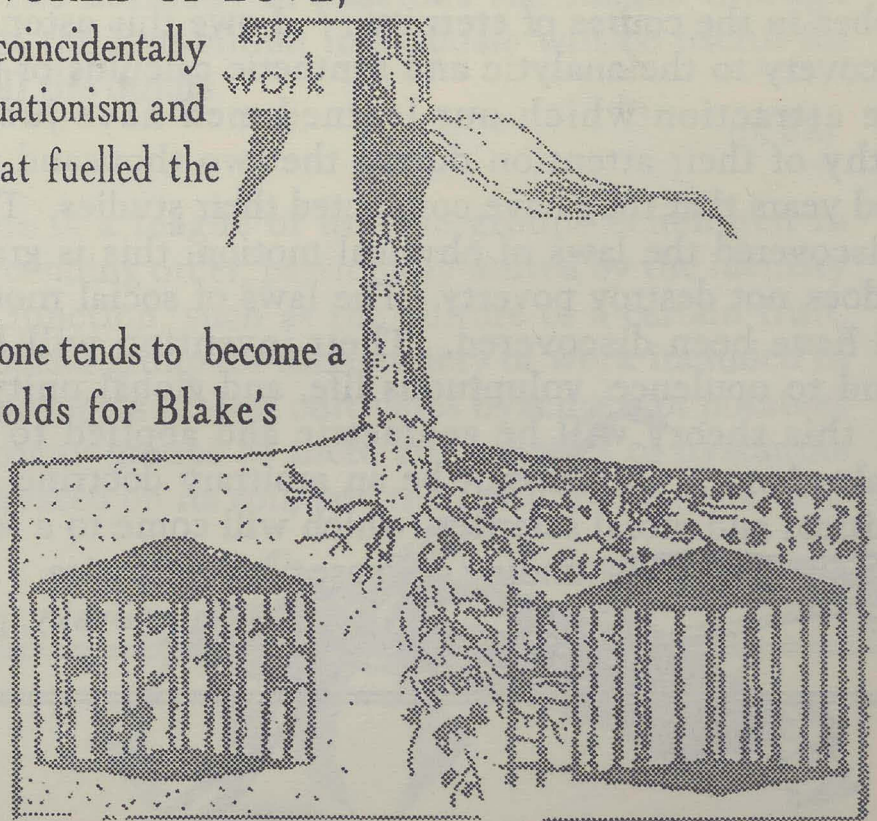
Brook Farm was noted for its creativity, its happy love affairs and communal sense of fun; the North American Phalanx left its members with fond memories.

(3) Note: I heard this theory about Whitman from Allen Ginsberg; I don't know where he got it. A nice coincidence includes a so-called Butterfly Strange Attrtactor in modern chaos science. I suspect that Fourier's theory of Attraction may throw light on — or at least provide metaphors for — the whole subject of Strange Attractors and morphogenesis.

III. BIG ROCK CANDY MOUNTAIN

The "mad" aspect of Fourier's teaching however really had to wait till the early 20th century for full appreciation. Even his bizarre writing style finally came into its own only with the discoveries (or re-discoveries) of dada and Surrealism. (Fourier described his first book as "a masquerade by its methodical violation of rules, its premature and inopportune information, and other studied bizarre features.") The hip structuralism of a Barthes or the anarcho-marxism of a Benjamin suddenly made Fourier's weirdest and most

opaque thoughts light up from within and become transparent. Modern feminists found that Fourier had actually coined the word "feminism" to describe his doctrine. In 1967 the long suppressed manuscript of Fourier's sexual writings, THE NEW WORLD OF LOVE, was finally published — coincidentally in time for the mix of Situationism and anarchist insurrection that fuelled the "May '68" in Paris.



While reading Fourier one tends to become a Fourierist (the same holds for Blake's

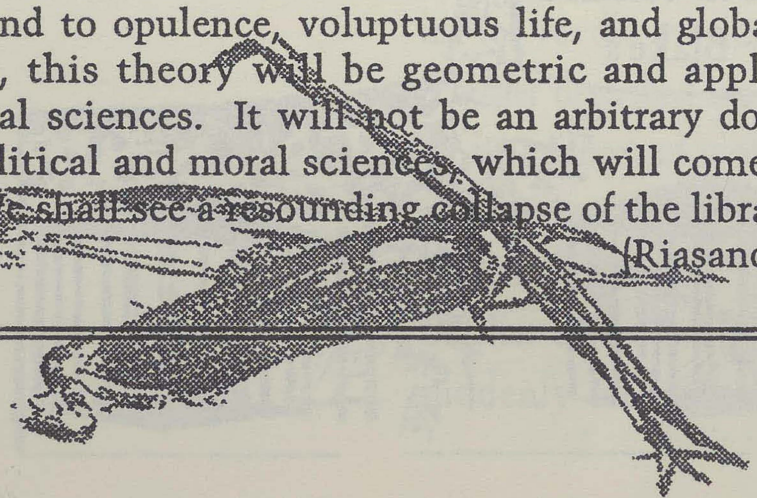
A BOXED MOSAIC OF FOURIER QUOTATIONS

(Note: The quotations here are lifted from Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, *The Teaching of Charles Fourier* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, Univ. of CA Press, 1969), which happens to be the only Fourier text I have with me in West Lima, as I write this.)

1. The System

The calculus of Harmony . . . is a mathematical theory of the destinies of all the globes and their inhabitants, of the sixteen social orders which can be established on the various globes in the course of eternity . . . I owe this astonishing discovery to the analytic and synthetic calculus of passionate attraction which our learned men have judged unworthy of their attention during the two thousand five hundred years that they have conducted their studies. They have discovered the laws of physical motion; this is grand, but it does not destroy poverty. The laws of social motion should have been discovered. Their invention will lead mankind to opulence, voluptuous life, and global unity. I repeat, this theory will be geometric and applied to the physical sciences. It will not be an arbitrary doctrine like the political and moral sciences, which will come to a sorry end. We shall see a resounding collapse of the libraries.

(Riasanovsky, p. 7)



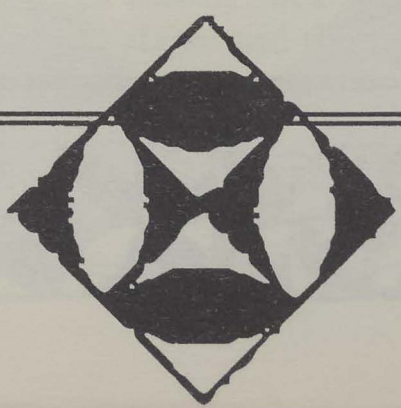
2. The Passions

Passions, so much downgraded by philosophers, are the most sublime work of God, the one to which He applied the most profound calculus. Only one kind of harmony can be seen in other branches of movement; but all are united in the mechanics of passions. This is an immense orchestra arranged for five billion instruments or characters which will inhabit our planet—not counting the animals, vegetables, aromas,and minerals all of which enter into the framework of the harmony of the passions, the harmony with which everything is coordinated. This will be difficult to believe, but it will be demonstrated that God knew how to apply in his theory of the harmony of passions the means through which each one of the five billion individuals will be useful for the happiness of all the others.

(p. 32)

A passional series is a league of diverse groups echeloned in ascending and descending order, passionally united by the identity of taste for some function, such as the culture of a certain fruit, and providing a special group for each variety of work included in the object which occupies it. If it cultivates hyacinths or potatoes it must form as many groups as there are varieties of hyacinths which can be cultivated on its soil, and the same goes for the varieties of potatoes.

(p. 46)



3. Life At The Phalanx

[Mondor's day in summer]

Sleep from 10:30 in the evening until 3 in the morning

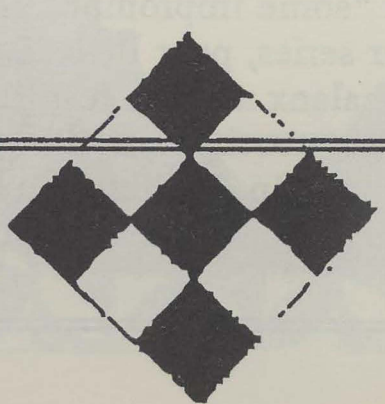
at 3:30	rise, preparation for the day
at 4	"cour du lever public," news chronicle
at 4:30	*breakfast*, the first meal, followed by a parade of workers
at 5:30	a session in a hunting group
at 7	a session in a fishing group
at 8	*lunch*, newspapers
at 9	a session in a group for cultivation under tent
at 10	a session at the Mass
at 10:30	a session in a group at the pheasant house
at 10:30 [*sic*]	a session at the library
at 1	*dinner*
at 2:30	a session in a group for plant cultivation in a glass house
at 4	a session in a group for exotic plants
at 5	a session in a group for live-fish tanks
at 6	*a snack* outdoors
at 6:30	a session for a group of merinos
at 4 [*sic*]	a session at the bourse
at 9	*supper*, the fifth meal
at 9:30	"cours des arts," concerts, balls, performances, receptions
at 10:30	*going to bed.*

A brief description of a day of a participant could render better than mere listing the spirit of activity, excitement, and intrigue that prevailed in a phalanx. Thus, Lucile, age seven, after the usual earlyrise & meal worked until six thirty in her "groupe des pigeons" and after that, until seven forty-five, in the kitchen. She had lunch with her ballet group and then a rehearsal until ten when refreshments were served. Next she worked in a group of maids cleaning rooms, andafter that went to the house where she negotiated "au parquet desenfants." She had a lively dinner as a member of a group engaged in looking after the fowl, and in fact stayed too long at the table and missed a session with her group for "strawberries of the Orient." Members of another group tried promptly, although unsuccessfully, to recruit her. In the afternoon Lucile engaged in shepherding, but was sought out during the refreshment time at four by officers of her strawberry group and told by them of the danger of their group being eclipsed and also of her promotion. Fortunately, very shortly afterward the venerable Frédegonde came to feed her favorite carp and, after being helped by Lucile, promised to support the group for "strawberries of the Orient" against their rivals. The shepherding ended at six and was followed by a snack and two more jobs: cleaning rooms with a group of maids until seven thirty, and preparing in a group of "fruitiers" baskets of fruit decorated with leaves until eight thirty. The evening brought more pleasures. The usual family supper at nine was cancelled because a caravan of visitors had arrived from other phalanxes. Therefore, all ate in public dining rooms where they formed "some impromptu groups." While we find Lucile well set in her series, poor little Zoë rose to full participation in the life of a phalanx and the resulting happiness simply because she had a sweet tooth, something that would have brought her only punishment in Civilization where she would have kept asking for sweets and delicacies unobtainable to her.

4. Humans will grow tails with hands on the end and an eyeball in the palm of the hand.

Fourier was especially critical that people in civilization use as a rule one and not both arms, neglect their toes, and in general fail to develop their physical potential. It was apparently an extension of the same kind of preoccupation that made the father of Harmony assign an additional powerful, useful, and magnificent member to the Solarians, to the hilarious delight of his critics. For a discussion of this additonal member see Fourier, *La fausse industrie*, Vol. I, pp. 442-443; *Oeuvres*, Anthropos, Vol. VIII, pp. 442-443. Recently Jonathan Beecher demonstrated that, according to Fourier, after 16 generations, that is, some 400 years, of the existence of Harmony, Harmonians would also aquire this splendid additional member, "archibras" or tail. The relevant passage had been excised by Fourier's disciples. Jonathan Beecher, "L'archibras de Fourier. Un manuscritcensuré," *La Brèche*, No. 7 (December 1964), pp. 66-71.

(p. 72)



5. The importance of Opera and the "wisdom of the stomach" in education

In a detailed analysis the father of the phalanx emphasized seven elements in an opera: singing or measured human voice, instruments or measured artificial sound, poetry or measured word, gesture or measured expression, dance or measured march, gymnastics or measured bodily movements, and painting, decorations, and costumes or measured ornament. Altogether the opera constituted a mechanism of measured geometric distribution, "the active emblem of the spirit of God or the spirit of measured unity." Combination or grafting of independent elements, and measure, two of Fourier's favorite principles, found a splendid embodiment in the opera.

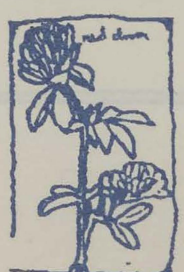
The results of operatic training would be equally splendid, and they would extend beyond the extremely important subject matter itself, and even beyond the general development of the senses and of dexterity:

"Considered from the point of view of a moral influence on the child, it is there that youth is taught to look with horror at everything that wounds truth, justice and unity. At the opera no favor can excuse himwho is false in voice, measure, gesture, or step. The child of a prince participating in troupes or choirs is forced to suffer the truth and the motivated criticisms of the crowd. It is at the opera that he learns to subordinate himself in every movement to the unitary coordination, to the general accord. The opera is thus the school of material unity, of justice, and of truth: it is, in these respects, the image of the divine spirit, the true road of 'the ways of Harmony.'"

The cuisine remained Fourier's special concern throughout his life. Not only did he consider the sensual passion of taste, with hunger resulting from a denial of its claims and gastronomy developed to minister to its needs, as a fundamental factor in human life and history, he also exhibited a particular attraction to that factor. Fourier's writings are full of groups and series devoted to such matters as different variants of soups, of competitions on a tremendous scale to produce the best *paté*, of brilliant careers made in the field of pastries and jams. In Harmony, where the true science of gastrosophy would replace our weak and corrupt gastronomy, people would eat enormously and yet retain, because of the scientificcuisine and the general nature of life in the new society, perfect health. A humble fare would consist of a choice of some 30 or 40 dishes, as well as beverages, of a quality surpassing the delicacies of present-day gastronomes. And the Harmonians would always innovate. "A Harmonian has each day two gastrosophic cabals regarding festive dishes . . . the poorest third-class table does not pass a day without enjoying some gastronomic novelties." Sugary confections and fruits would replace bread as staple food. Leading cooks would acquire the importance and prestige of ministers of s t a t e . Children in particular would find "a thousand sources of

industrial intrigue in the products of the children's kitchen, in thesugared creams, compotes, pastry, sweets, herbs and fruits." Their education by means of the cuisine would thus be the most natural kind imaginable, the most likely to attract them and to satisfy their passions, and at the same time it would prepare them for an extremely important aspect of human life. Moreover, the cuisine, like the opera, led beyond itself. "It is in the kitchen and at the table that children in Harmony learn at an early age to appreciate animals and vegetables, and the mistakes committed in their education and cultivation. The more refined they become as gourmets, the more interest they take in the preparation. The two arts of the cook and the gastronome become for them a way to hygiene, then to chemistry, then to agronomy and other sciences. Frequenting the kitchens is thus to a child in Harmony a key to all studies." No wonder that cooks in Harmony would be "scientists of the first order," "pivots of education and enjoyments."

(pp 74-76)



6. On Christ and Christianity

Fourier found numerous specific points in the Bible illustrating and supporting his teaching, and he was quick to overcome such obstacles to his views as Christ's assertion that Christ's kingdom was not of this world: certainly it was not of this world as it now stood, not of Civilization; it will become of this world when the world enters the stage of Harmony. As to the resemblances between Christ's teaching and Fourier's perhaps most remarkable is Fourier's interpretation of Christ as a hedonist: at the wedding in Cana He changed water into "exquisite wine," He fed five thousand people with bread and fish, Hecomplained of His hard lot when He had no place to rest His head, He reprimanded the Jews for reproaching Him His love of good meals, and He sat down for a refined dinner at a Pharisee's while a courtesan spread perfumes over Him, etc. It should be added that this view of Christianity was unusual for Fourier. More often he argued that Christian precepts, frequently the opposite of his, were by that very token appropriate for Civilization, while Fourier's were meant for Harmony. In Civilization one was forced to restrain one's passions, one had to be modest, self-denying, and so forth.

(p. 104)

7. Nuclear Families

To manipulate society one must begin with a study of characters and their affinities or sympathies, both among themselves and in relation to the entire society, items totally unknown to Civilized legislators, for they have brought domestic society to the highest degree of isolation and egoism by dividing it into sexual couples of exclusive married households. Would it be possible to push unsociability farther, and could one invent a domestic system reduced to less than a couple? Of course not; reproduction would become impossible if the domestic order were reduced to a single individual; by the same token proper functioning would become impossible. Fromwhich it is obvious that the life of married households, or couples, is unsociability reduced to its simplest form. A fine accomplishment for sages pretending to be philanthropists and wishing to make of mankind a single family of brothers . . .

(p. 149)

8. Politics of Civilization

Our politics, forced to resort to expedients to contain a famished population, inspires in it a stupid respect for chiefs. It transforms kings into adorable and infallible divine beings; it wants one to burnwith a love for them without ever having seen them, and on this point I do not see much difference between Civilized customs and those of the Tibetan Tartars who carry around their neck as a sign of honor a little sack filled with the excrements of their master, the great lama. The canaille in Civilization and Barbarism must be a thoroughly miserable lot to make it necessary to bring into play so many absurd prejudices in order to muzzle it and to prop up the bayonets which are the basis of political wisdom.

(p. 152)

9. The Prison of Work

Disfavors of the workers

NOTE. This ladder is merely a very incomplete aperçu; I am handing it over to those more experienced; they will easily be able to double the series of the misfortunes of the poor, after which the series will be classified more methodically.

Pressing evil. 1. Collection of taxes: the pursuit of fiscal agents who come to snatch from him pennies saved with so much pain for the support of his unfortunate family.

2. The necessity to expose his health to excessive and unhealthy work on which his and his children's subsistence depends.

Direct evil. 3. The counter-blow of misfortune, communicated suffering, or the ability to feel the ills of his family whose privations add to his.

4. New misfortunes which come to double his pain when he believes to have exhausted the severities of fate.

5. Unjust stigma, opprobrium and defamation which attach themselves to the poor man because of his penury, and expose him the more to disdain the more he is pressed by need.

Indirect evil. 6. A view of the favorites of fortune whom chance, intrigue or crime raise every day to affluence, as if to throw into despair the honest worker whose probity engulfs him deeper and deeper into indigence

7. A relative decline because of the growth of luxury which, by creating each day new means of enjoyment for the rich, increases by the same token the sufferings of the multitude deprived of necessities and affected by a display of this growth of luxury, which a savage does not see.

8. Frustration of the ways of salvation provided by the law, such as legal reclamations and others, which he cannot attempt because of a lack of fortune and the impossibility of obtaining a loan.

Accessory evil. 9. Social snares, or the danger of being deceived at every

step by his fellow-citizens, of meeting in the social world nothing but swarms of rascals or disguised enemies.

10. Poverty anticipated at present, or the fear to be out of work, which is a free undertaking for a savage or an animal.

11. Scientific derision, or the illusory help of literary charlatans, who, while promising the people an attenuation of their ills, crush them with new calamities.

12. The moral trap, or persecution attracted by the exercise of virtue which, by offending perverse rivals, leads them to calumny which is always well-received in Civilization.

Pivots. Industrial repugnance and the absence of a prerogative of animals, the beavers, the bees, etc., who, feeling attraction for work, find their happiness in that work which is the torture of the Civilized. Betrayal of nature, or martyrdom of attraction; the goad of numerous desires which a Civilized person cannot satisfy and which lead him to his destruction, whereas nature gives to an animal only passions appropriate for its guidance and at the same time gives it a full right to satisfy them.

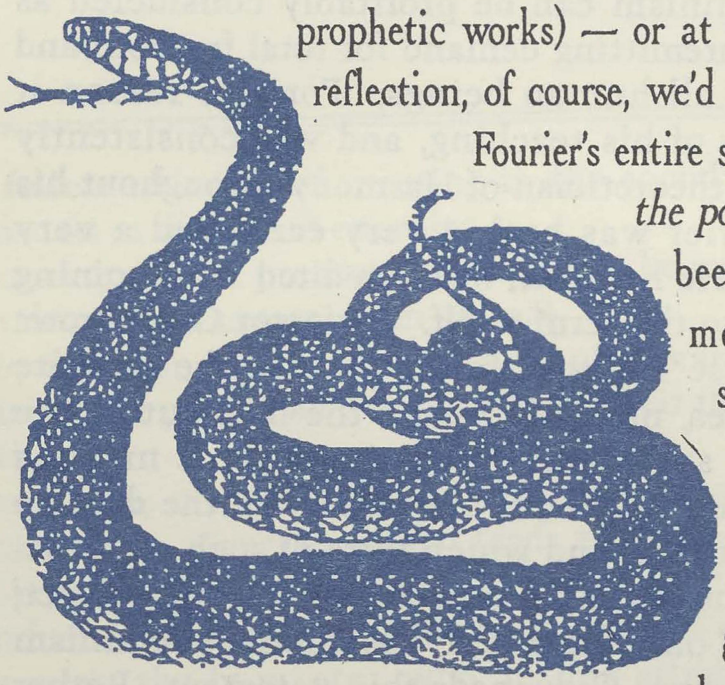
Transitions. A vexing return to the past, recollection of numerous miseries already endured and still to be feared. Anticipated or future suffering, or the ability to foresee for one's old age, in a distant future, a growth of ills without any means of escaping them.

(pp. 155-156)

10. Feminism

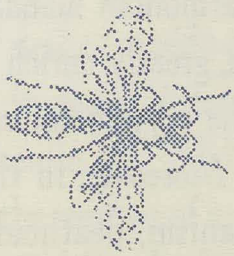
Fourier's feminism can be profitably considered as one aspect of his unremitting demand for total freedom and self-expression for all human beings. For this reason it stood at the center of his teaching, and was consistently championed by the theoretician of Harmony throughout his life. Charles Fourier was both a very early and a very extreme feminist. He has even been credited with coining or giving currency to the term itself. Professor Gide wrote: "Fourier was the first 'feminist' in the sense of the absolute equality of the sexes, not only before the law, but before morality. On this subject he proclaimed some maxims which are wholly remarkable, if one thinks on the date on which they were written, and which were of such a character that nothing more daring has been said [on the subject] as of today." Nor, one might add, has Fourier's feminism become at all passé since Gide made this statement. Rather it represents one of the many striking and strange links between Fourier and the concerns of today and, presumably, tomorrow.

As has been indicated, Fourier measured historical progress by the degree to which women acquired rights in a given society. This gage followed naturally from his overwhelming emphasis on human freedom and self-expression, and it attracted unstinting admiration and praise from manv



prophetic works) — or at least some of us do. On reflection, of course, we'd be fools to "agree" with Fourier's entire system — *But that's not the point!* It's enough to have been seduced once by this melancholic renter of shabby rooms, lover of cats and flowers, to experience the stunning psychedelic grandeur of his vision, to become a Fourierist forever after — at least, in some surrealist sense of the term.

However, I'd like to go farther than a simple expression of love for Fourier's *poetique* (so to speak). We might well emphasize certain aspects of his social teaching which possess an almost eery resonance with our own contemporary *politique*. The Harmonian Way still overflows with potential for enriching our our post-Situationist post-dada post-anarchist epistemology, 'pataphysical driftwork, poetic terrorism, TAZ-praxis, etc., etc., whatever you want to call it.



IV. Excuses For Celebration

1) The question of Work, the problem of "leisure" — the central axis of the Totality (the Planetary Work Machine, Babylon, etc.) — the relations between production, RE-production, and consumption — and the critique of Spectacular commodity fetishism — this entire complex is reflected and in a sense "solved" in the mirror of Fourier's "politics of desire". "Zero-work", the overcoming of the Work Machine, would define positive laziness as virtually synonymous with the obsessive and orgasmic frenzy of the Phalanstery — like the Taoist cobbler whose sign said "I never work" because making excellent shoes was in truth his *pleasure*. Here also will be found light to shed on the problem of technology — the debate between "primitivists" (Zerzan, Fifth Estate, Earth First!, etc.) and "futurists" (anarcho-libertarians, Whole Earth appropriate-technists, Mondo 2000 neo-psychedelic hackers, etc.) can only be resolved in the crucible of insurrection and desire (or "Passion" if you like). We agree with Fourier (and Nietzsche too) that "Civilization" is to be overcome — and that which dissolves it and appropriates it can only flow from the libidinal/imaginal faculty of *conviviality*, of living-together in enjoyment and creativity.

2) Enjoyment — jouissance — applied hedonics — the actual "calculus of the Passions". Debord and Vaneighem, Deleuze and Guattari — among others — developed this aspect of Fourier's teaching — perhaps without being fully aware of

the source. The contemplation of the Harmonian mandala (Solar System/Phalanx/Passions) would, I believe, greatly enrich the work of those theorists of today who oppose the crypto-fascist slime of "deconstruction" and "post-modernism". Moreover, in this era of trendy renunciation, 12-step neo-puritanism, deathculture and psychic mutilation, Fourier's message of LUXURY rings a pure golden bell to dispel demons. Nietzsche and Bataille reveal that the true secret economy of Earth is one of excess and generosity, not scarcity and oppression — and Fourier has some excellent suggestions about what to do with the *endless surplus* of life and power on the material plane. Gourmet food, polysexuality, and health without boredom — this is the "Utopian Minimum" (5).

3) Utopian poetics: the question of aesthetics and the role of art. In Harmony, although some will be more "creative" and others less so, clearly a condition will be realized which the Situationists called "the suppression and realization of Art" — a reflection of the paleolithic "shamanic democracy" in which "everyone" is an "artist". Fourier anticipated 12-tone music and the "happening" (the "Museum Orgy", in which the phalansterians pose and perform erotic skits for each other); his style pre-shadows Surrealism and its later successors; his theory of Analogies virtually IS surrealism; and his vision of the Opera as total art-work not only preceeds that of Wagner but also Breton, Artaud, and even Joseph Beuys, Fluxus, Neoism, etc., etc.

4) Fourier solved the problem of the *media-trance*, and mediation/alienation, before it was really a problem. In the emphasis on conviviality, on living-together face-to-face, on IMMEDI-

(5) Fourier demanded of any experimental phalanx that it provide an "economic minimum" and an "amorous minimum"; I call the combination of these demands the "utopian minimum".

ATE realization of desire (outside all relations of mediation) in the alchemical fire of Passional Attraction and Attractive Labor — there lies the authentic and valid donation Fourier made to *our* "future", in which the sorrows of a merely "virtual" reality threaten to overwhelm us amidst the lonely crowd of phantom data, cyberspace, CyberGnosis.

5) Finally, Fourier's "insane" cosmology should prove immensely useful as a parallel paradigm (which might well be called "radical neo-hermeticism" as well as "neo-Fourierism") helping to inform and shape the so-called Gaia hypothesis — the idea that the Earth is ALIVE. Fourier's model holds great interest as a form of "vitalism" which does not demand the "hidden variable" of divine purpose or a metaphysics of teleology. Fourier's system, in a sense, is *self-animated*, and the question of the universe's coming-into-being can be answered without recourse to forces from outside the material/bodily sphere (6).

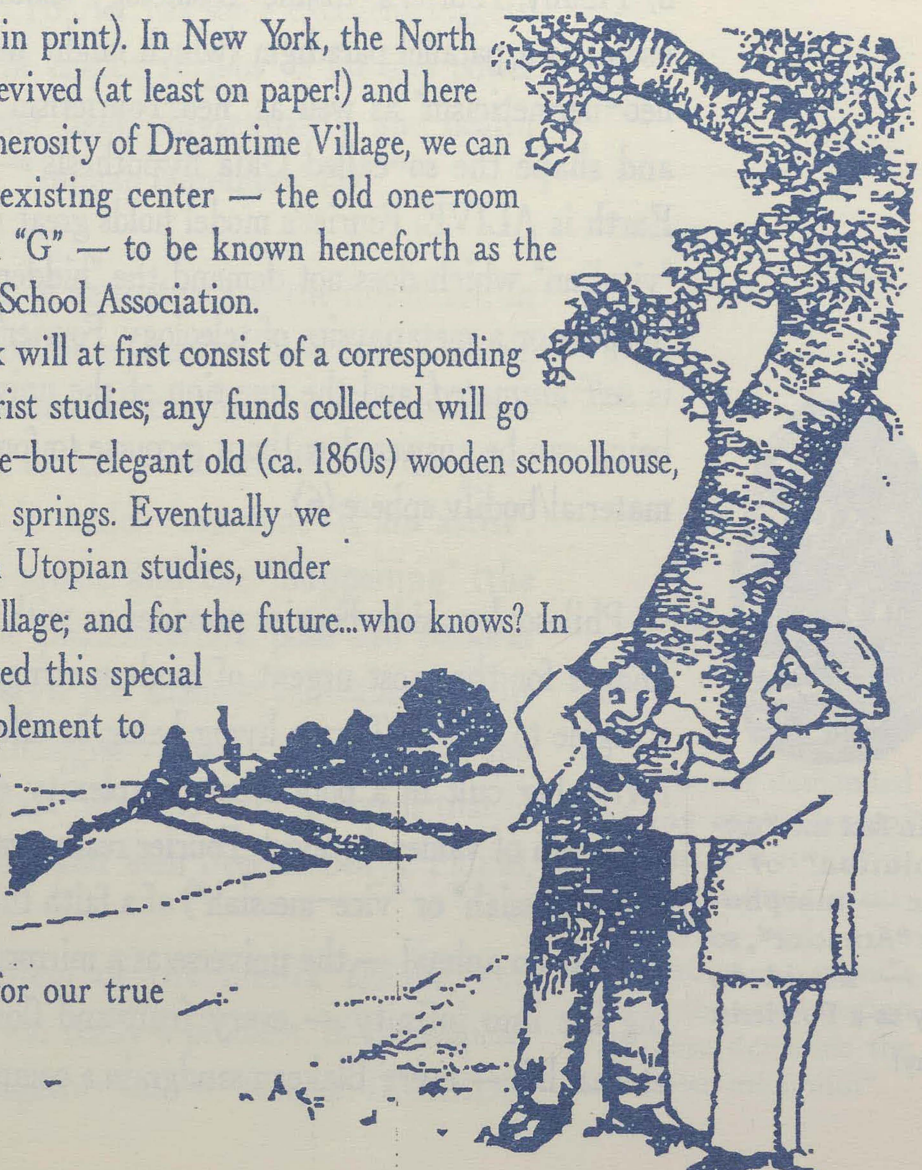
6) Note: In fact the "creative evolution" of I. Prigogine — morphogenesis by "Attractor", so to speak — would do very nicely as a Fourierist cosmogony!

Philosophy aside, Fourier provides us with mythopoeic power-images for the most urgent of modern struggles, the paradigm-struggle to decalre Terra a living being, in effect a goddess, and to revive her cult in a polyvalent complexity of discourse and re-valuation of values. In short, Fourier really was the "hypomessiah" ("sub-messiah" or "vice-messiah") of a faith that preaches the universe as an animal — the universe as a mirror of itself, life reflecting life into infinity — every fruit and flower an epiphany of eternal life — every Blakean sandgrain a complete "explanation".

V. Foundation Of The Bender Hollow Phalanx

For these reasons, there has been an attempt to revive interest in Fourier as a powerful force and genial guide for today. A number of important recent works have appeared (notably Jon. Beecher's biography of Fourier, and Carl Guarneri's study of the American Fourierist movement) but much publishing needs to be done (especially facsimile reprints of the two Fourier works translated in the 19th century, the *Four Movements* and *Passions of the Human Soul*, neither of which is now in print). In New York, the North American Phalanx has been revived (at least on paper!) and here in Wisconsin, thanks to the generosity of Dreamtime Village, we can actually enjoy the use of an existing center — the old one-room schoolhouse on County Trunk "G" — to be known henceforth as the Bender Hollow Phalanx & "G" School Association.

The Bender Hollow Phalanx will at first consist of a corresponding membership devoted to Fourierist studies; any funds collected will go toward restoration of the simple-but-elegant old (ca. 1860s) wooden schoolhouse, or upkeep of its meadows and springs. Eventually we intend to hold a conference on Utopian studies, under the auspices of Dreamtime Village; and for the future...who knows? In the meantime we have produced this special Bender Hollow Phalanx Supplement to the DREAMTIME TALKINGMAIL — and of course, we shall keep Bender Hollow and the Driftless Bioregion in our imaginations as a focus for our true desires..



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